

Message Text

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47

ACTION EA-09

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R 110911Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8750

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 12009

E O 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, RP, MY

SUBJ: MARCOS PERCEPTION OF SABAH AFFAIRS

1. DURING AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON PRESIDENT MARCOS AUGUST 6 ON OCCASION OF ADMIRAL GAYLER'S VISIT, CONVERSATION TURNED BRIEFLY TO AFFAIRS IN SABAH. MARCOS OBSERVED THAT MUSTAPHA HAD APPARENTLY AGREED NOT TO CONTEST SEATS VACATED BY TAUN FUAD STEPHENS AND OTHER BERJAYA MEMBERS KILLED IN JUNE 6 PLANE CRASH, IMPLYING THAT THIS WAS PART OF AN OVERALL MODUS VIVENDI. HE EXPRESSED DOUBTS ABOUT YOUTH AND APPARENT INEXPERIENCE OF NEW SABAH CHIEF MINISTER, HARRIS BIN SALLEH. HE THEN MENTIONED REPORTS THAT FORMER CHIEF MINISTER TUN MUSTAPH WAS PERSONALLY BUYING A CLAIM IN THE SULTANATE OF SULU FROM ONE OF THE LEADING CLAIMANTS RESIDENT IN SABAH.

2. COMMENT: ALL THIS ILLUSTRATES, MARCOS AND PROBABLY HIS SECURITY ADVISERS ARE STILL UNWILLING TO RULE OUT POSSIBILITY OF A MUSTAPHA COMEBACK IN SABAH. THEIR APPREHENSIONS ON THIS RESPECT ARE NO DOUBT INFLAMED BY PERSISTENT REPORTS FROM SULU AREA THAT MUSTAPHA
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IS RECRUITING TAUSUG KINSMEN FROM PHILIPPINE SIDE OF

BORDER FOR HIS PRIVATE ARMY, PRESUMABLY WITH AIR OF ANTI-BERJAYA JIHAD AT SOME POINT. (THESE RUMORS ARE EAGERLY CIRCULATED BY FILIPINO TAUSUGS WHO TEND TO TAKE PRIDE IN MUSTAPHA'S BIGGER-THAN-LIFE REPUTATION.) WE ASSUME THAT CLAIMANT TO SULU THRONE REFERRED TO BY MARCOS IS DATUK PUJUNGAN, REPORTEDLY RESIDENT IN KUDAT, BROTHER OF SULTAN ISMAEL WHO DIED IN 1973. THERE ARE, OF COURSE, OTHER CLAIMANTS AND IN ANY CASE WE DOUBT THAT CLAIMS TO ROYALTY ARE NEGOTIABLE EVEN IN SULU. WHATEVER THEIR JUSTIFICATION, DOUBTS ABOUT FUTURE OF SABAH LIKELY INHIBIT WHATEVER INCLINATION MARCOS MAY HAVE TO FORMALLY RENOUNCE GOP'S SABAH CLAIM.
SULLIVAN

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